



RUN FOR THE WALL

Quarterly Newsletter

“We Ride For Those Who Can’t”

January 2017

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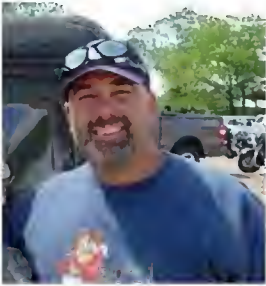
THE EDITOR'S NOTES

This issue is the hardest one I've ever had to put together, as I have to add my own son to the "Taps" section. Eddie "Lil Grumpy" Lacey passed away in his sleep October 9 of a heart attack. I was so proud of him, so I hope you won't mind if I tell you a little about him.

Eddie didn't serve in the military, but after I joined RFTW in 2003 he listened to my accounts and looked at my photos from the Runs and I could tell he was drawn to the mission and especially to the plight of Vietnam Veterans and what they had gone through when they came home. In 2006 he decided to join me on the Run, driving a CR chase vehicle. We rode together for three or four years, and I don't think I had ever seen him so happy. He wanted so much to go with RFTW every year, but with a young family to raise, it just wasn't possible. But even if he couldn't go all the way, every year he met us in Rancho and rode to Needles before returning



home, just so he could spend a little time with his beloved veterans. He loved veterans so much, and received great satisfaction from supporting them. His nickname was “Grumpy” —although it was a misnomer because he was always cheerful—and RFTW gave him the name “Lil Grumpy” because there were already two riders called Grumpy.



Eddie’s dedication to veterans grew quickly. He also joined the Patriot Guard Riders and only missed a mission if he couldn’t get away from the glass shop that he and his wife Sandi owned. He participated in every Ride to the Flags and never hesitated to get up at O-dark thirty to go to airports to welcome home troops from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Lil Grumpy had turned into a huge patriot, and I was so proud of him for his respect and support of our veterans. He often said how much he wished he had served, and I know that he would have served his country well. This Run probably will be my last ATW Run, and to honor Eddie, I’ll be carrying his ashes so he can go on his final RFTW. I know that he would be so honored to see some of you help carry his ashes.

See you in May,
Judy “Velcro” Lacey

Freedom is never free. It is paid for with the blood of the brave. It is paid for with the tears of their loved ones. It is up to us to preserve and defend that which they have paid so dearly for.

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Wow, where has this year gone? 2017 already! This, of course, means that we are over halfway to the next Run, but I’m afraid that the riders in some sections of our country will not be getting much riding in between now and then. Looks like a hard winter in the north central and northeast, if what we have seen so far is any indication of what the future might bring. Every time a storm comes across Portland or San Francisco, the folks to our right get nailed. In Southern California we get nothing! This, naturally, is a blessing for most of us down/over here.

What has the BOD been up to? The usual stuff, working with our Coordinators to ensure that all is ready for the middle of May. They are all doing a fine job. All indications are that the hotel list will be published right on time this year on January 1st and not a minute before. Unfortunately, Social Media has acted unofficially to announce that rooms were available in Arlington and the Host Hotel seems to be sold out. So, if you by some minor miracle have some inside information, please don’t broadcast it far and wide. We need to make sure that our FNGs get a room in the Host City, at least, preferably at the host hotel. As for Ontario, we, and that does include me, do not even have the call-in number yet in order to make our reservations. Ken Hargrove, our Ontario Hotel Coordinator, informs me that there will be only one number made available for reserving a room in the RFTW block and that is the number we have yet to get. There is not a very big problem, however, because the reservation desk has indicated that they WANT to take on the entire ridership!



In case no one has noticed yet, we have put the Benevolence Fund page back up for those qualifying organizations and individuals needing some level of financial assistance associated with the Run and/or our mission. I will borrow some language from Kathy, our webmaster, who has done an excellent job over the past year in assisting us with this website endeavor: “The Benevolence Fund exists to provide scholarship funding to organizations that support veterans and the Run for the Wall mission to promote healing among ALL veterans and their families and friends, to call for an accounting of all Prisoners of War and those Missing in Action (POW/MIA), to honor the memory of those Killed in Action (KIA) from all wars, and to support our military personnel all over the world. In addition, the Benevolence Fund provides scholarships to individual veterans or active duty military so they are able to participate in The Run. There is a large population of Vietnam Veterans, our ‘old warriors’ that participate every year to receive a welcome home, respect and healing. However, taking a cue from the Native American culture, these ‘old warriors’ look to reach out and help the ‘young warriors’ as they return from their service to our great country. While the younger generation of veterans probably will never face the persecution from the general public that Vietnam Vets did, The Run understands these warriors still face the inevitable side effects—both physical and mental.”

The forms are available on our new website under the ‘About’ tab at the top of the page, and then choose RFTW Benevolence Fund. Forms can be either mailed in or submitted on line. Under normal circumstances the paperwork is due in to the Board by the end of the year, but inasmuch as that milestone is already past us, we have extended the due date until the end of February, but we will then absolutely have to shut is down to give us time to review the applicants and make some decisions. If you have any questions, my email address is posted below and on the website.

I know that it might seem early to mention this, but if anyone is considering stepping up to a leadership position, now is the time to make that known. Most positions have already been filled for this coming May, but things happen between now and then and I’m sure that some vacancies will develop. If you want to participate, let the Route Coordinators know now. If something comes up they can consider those who have expressed an interest. And there is always the Run in 2018. It does seem like it is still far away, but we start filling positions for next year on this year’s Run. By September, the cadre is pretty much identified. The senior positions require that you have completed the Run “All the Way,” but some of the others do not. For some of our existing leaders, there is always the potential to move on – Board positions open up every year. We do not encourage FNGs to take on any responsibility beyond getting themselves to Arlington safely. I know, you have been riding for 40+ years and handling a motorcycle has become second nature. BUT this journey is different. You will see. Brace yourself. It’s like no other experience you have had.

If anyone has any questions, comments or concerns, what so ever, I encourage them to contact a Board Member so that these concerns can be put on our agenda and discussed on our monthly meetings. Contact info for the Directors is listed on the website. (My email is Harry.Steelman@RFTW.us and my cell phone is 949-422- 8325, but email is by far the best as I do still have a “real” job and can’t always take a call.) Our monthly BOD meetings are by conference call and are held in closed session. Our next Face to Face meeting will be in Phoenix in February, which will also be a closed session. I will report on what we discuss.

Again, I want to reiterate to all what an honor I consider it to be to be asked to serve you all in this capacity. I have taken a past president’s parting comments to heart: We (expressly the BOD) need to always remember “Why we do this” and that “Providing a healing experience for the Riders should be our paramount concern.” In fact EVERYONE should strive to remember this as we prepare for our next journey.

My wife and I hope that everyone enjoyed the most joyous of holiday seasons, regardless of how you may or may not have celebrated it. I will write again after our February Face-to- Face. In the meantime – BE SAFE!

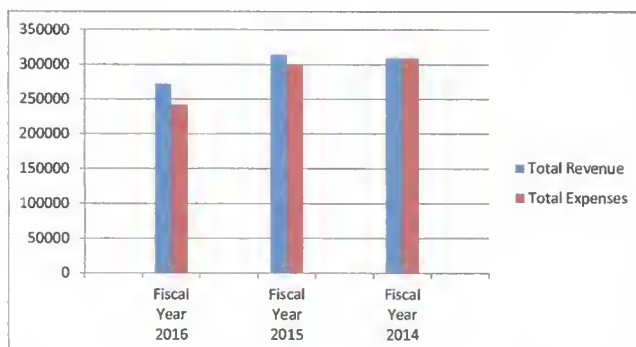
Harry “Attitude” Steelman
RFTW BOD – 2016-2017

► 2016 FINANCIAL REPORT

Following is the RFTW Financial Report as of August 31, 2015

RUN FOR THE WALL Abbreviated Statement of Financial Position as of August 31, 2016

	28th Year	27th Year	26th Year
Category	Fiscal Year 2016	Fiscal Year 2015	Fiscal Year 2014
Total Revenue	\$ 272,019.00	\$ 315,081.51	\$ 309,508.82
Total Expenses	\$ 242,218.00	\$ 300,010.97	\$ 309,474.60
Interest Earned	\$ 31.00	\$ 9.00	\$ 4.59
Revenue in Excess of Expenses	\$ 29,832.00	\$ 15,079.54	\$ 38.81
BREAKDOWN			
RFTW Checking	\$ 25,387.98	\$ 16,662.91	\$ 113,570.70
RFTW Savings	\$ 140,126.47	\$ 115,098.48	\$ 15,086.56
Individual Routes	\$ 42,880.50	\$ 26,410.96	\$ 17,631.87
RFTA Funds	\$ -	\$ 5,917.00	\$ 6,857.00
Hero's Bike Build	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 3,890.76
Archive Committee	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00
	\$ 208,894.95	\$ 164,589.35	\$ 157,536.89
NOTES:			
Revenue includes all routes			
Expenses include all routes, including the additional route supplies.			
2014 - Midway Route Added			



RUN FOR THE WALL DONATIONS 2016

RFTW INC.	
Eagle Warriors/ Eagle's Up	1,425.00
Hero's Ride Inc.	1,500.00
Sons and Daughters In Touch, Inc.	500.00
The Bugle Boy Foundation	1,500.00
Town of Wytheville VA	500.00
TOTAL	5,425.00

CENTRAL ROUTE	
Cochiti Elementary School	1,250.00
J L Buford Intermediate School	1,000.00
Rainelle Elementary School	21,000.34
Valley Elementary School	1,000.00
Village of Eagle Nest	1,250.00
TOTAL	25,500.34

MIDWAY ROUTE	
Clinton Vet Center	1,400.00
Eagle Warriors	1,500.00
Falcon Children's Home	1,500.00
M25	1,500.00
Milan Elementary	500.00
National Vietnam War Museum	1,500.00
TOTAL	7,900.00

SOUTHERN ROUTE	
Amanda McGuinn*	1,250.00
City of Wytheville	1,001.00
Colorado City Elementary	4,000.00
Defenders of Freedom	7,221.00
Dubiski Career High School	3,000.00
Ibuku Oladejo*	2,000.00
Montvale Elementary School	4,000.00
Nathaniel O Brien*	2,000.00
National Vietnam War Museum	500.00
Sons & Daughters in Touch	500.00
Spiller Elementary	4,000.00
Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center	2,974.44
UMWSW	1,000.00
TOTAL	33,446.44

TOTAL DONATIONS	72,271.78
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* Scholarship Recipient

► RFTW 2017



IMPORTANT:

- (1) We leave as a Pack, and we arrive as a Pack. Our supporters have worked hard all year to raise money, planning for our arrival. We need to show our gratitude to them by attending these ceremonies. Unless it is an absolute emergency, you should not be pulling out of the pack.
- (2) There is no joining the run “on the fly.” We travel as a Pack. If for some reason you miss the morning meeting and start of day, you would need to rejoin at a gas or lunch stop, unless directed by a Road Guard or Leadership.
- (3) There will be NO use of alcohol or drugs during the day while we are en route. Remember: This is a Mission, Not a Party
- (4) DOT-approved helmets are mandatory on RFTW—no exceptions.
- (5) Riders meetings every morning are mandatory.
- (6) Payment for fuel is cash only—have \$1s, \$5s, \$10s, and \$20s readily accessible. NO CHANGE IS GIVEN!! Cost of fuel is rounded to the next higher dollar amount. If your fuel cost is \$8 and you pay with a \$10 bill, no change is given and you have made a \$2 donation. Overage donations are used to fuel our chase and support vehicles. Not Fueling? You must go through the fuel line and not break out of the Pack. You will be directed to Staging.
- (7) Be mindful that our Road Guards have a very stressful job. It is their responsibility to provide guidance and direction to us and the general public. Please follow their instructions at all times. They help us reach our destination with a minimum of inconvenience to the rest of the traveling public.
- (8) RFTW does not provide medical insurance and urges you not to operate a motorcycle without personal medical coverage.
- (9) New this year: SLING SHOTS or other SIDE BY SIDE SEATING vehicles are considered an automobile for RFTW purposes, regardless of individual state classification, and will ride ahead of the pack or behind the Last Man Vehicle. They cannot ride with any platoon, but can still participate and register.

REGISTRATION STATS

The following statistics are as of December 31:

Route	Total	Ontario	ATW	FNG
Central	129	105	102	47
Midway	83	66	64	31
Southern	146	119	117	49
	358	290	283	127

Last year by this time, we had 211 registered, but I don’t think we can make any suppositions based on these numbers since registration last year opened 12/1/2015, whereas currently registration has been open since September.

John “Wicked” McKee
RFTW BOD
Director of Risk Management

2017 SHIRT DESIGN

Shirts and other items can be purchased on www.RFTW.us website.



ROUTE COORDINATORS' LATEST NEWS

Central Route:

December 2, 2017

Good Morning Folks.

It's hard to believe it's December already. The coat drive for the children of Rainelle West Virginia went off beautifully. Ken and Jenny Ward and their committee did an absolutely wonderful job of organizing the event, and on a cold gray day they distributed 200 coats and hats to the children. Thanks to all who donated their time and money to pull this off. The folks with RFTW are the best people I have ever been associated with.

The planning for the 2017 Run is going forward smoothly. Don "EZ" Burns has ordered the hats and plans to complete the equipment order in the next couple of weeks. The State Coordinators have completed most of their work on the hotels and fuel stops, and the hotel list will be posted January first.

The Staging Team and Fuel Team are still in need of a few experienced RFTW riders to fill out their teams. This is a great way to give back. Please contact Staging Leader, John Staub, at bmds@att.net or the Fuel Leader, George Creacy, at geocreacy@msn.com.

I wish all of you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

With Respect.

Dick "Winky" McKay

"Never Forget"

Southern Route:

December 16, 2016

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Can you believe 2016 is almost over? In just a few days we all will start making that mistake that we all make every January of writing the wrong year every time we date something for a couple of weeks.

Here are a few things to bring you up to date on what is going on.

Online registration has been open for a while. We have over 100 people already registered for Southern route with Central route close behind in the 90s. Midway is the youngest and smallest route but they are coming along in the upper 60s as they build their traditions and establish their rider route loyalty.

We will be assigning platoons for the first time on Southern Route this year. Why? The answer is twofold but really quite simple. We are balancing the number of riders in each platoon as well as spreading the FNGs (new to RFTW riders) among platoons 3 – 10. These assignments will be made at the time you finalize your registration at your respective starting point. Once you have your license, vehicle registration, and insurance paperwork checked and you sign the appropriate paperwork you will step to the platoon assignment station. You will be assigned a platoon based on riding formation and type of bike or trike. If you have a request for a specific platoon THAT is the time to ask. The online registration is about getting you into the RFTW database only. Platoon assignments will be made onsite at the time of picking up your packets not during online registration. We will consider individual requests but the priority will be the safety, balancing, and functionality of the mission. I would ask all returning riders that may still have their 2016 or older platoon stickers on their bike to please remove them before registering. The 2017 stickers will be identifiable as current year and will be checked daily by the platoon leadership.

Platoons 1 & 2 will still be our side-by-side platoons and will be restricted to returning RFTW riders (no 2017 FNGs). Platoons 3 – 6 will be riding in staggered formation. Platoon 7 will be two-wheel bikes with trailers. Platoon 8 will be traditional trikes with trailers. Platoon 9 will be traditional trikes without trailers. We are adding Platoon 10 this year which will be all Can-Am or similar style trikes both with and without trailers. SLING SHOTS or other SIDE BY SIDE SEATING vehicles are considered an automobile for RFTW purposes regardless of individual state classification and will not ride inside the procession. Those vehicles along with all four wheelers and larger vehicles must ride ahead of or behind the formation by at least two miles. I very strongly suggest being well in front of us. Having been an RFTW road guard for five years, I can tell you the traffic can be a nightmare behind us. There will be OFFICIAL RFTW SUPPORT VEHICLES ONLY inside the formation with the bikes and trikes.

Now that you know where the various vehicles ride in the platoons we have another change for you. In 2016 the Southern route experimented with rotating platoons 7 – 9 to the front for one leg and back to the rear. We got good feedback on it. In 2017 we will rotate ALL platoons through ALL positions over the course of 10 days. Each platoon will get a chance to ride as the lead platoon. Each platoon will also get a chance to ride at the back and every position in between. As you can see, there will be not be any strategic advantage to being in a particular platoon. Everyone gets a chance to be first in the fuel line and to the restrooms and everyone gets to share in the misery of being last in the lines for fuel and to the restrooms. For those that say this can't work, Central route has been doing it for quite a few years successfully. We started with their plan and adapted it to Southern Route.

The part you all are really wanting to read. The hotel list is expected to launch on or about January 1. Maybe you can start a safe New Year's Day tradition. Try being the first to see if the list has been posted on the RFTW.us website. It will be under the Run Info tab, then Southern Route Hub tab. Toward the left side of the screen you will see Southern Route Hotels. Click there. BE WARNED. The 2016 hotel listing is still up but the 2017 list IS NOT THE SAME. There are three locations with new host hotels. There are several additions to and several deletions from the 2016 list. The 2017 prices have changed. DO NOT USE THE 2016 LIST TO BOOK YOUR 2017 HOTELS. I have received reports of riders downloading the 2016 list and calling hotels and arguing with the reservation clerks about the prices. The old list is still up as a placeholder ONLY. By the way, there are changes coming to the 2017 itinerary also. The 2016 Itinerary will serve as a reference guide of how we do things but that information is for 2016 not 2017.

I wish you all a safe and Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. As many of you attend gatherings and parties over the coming days, please drink responsibly if you feel the need to drink. Please use a designated driver or call a taxi if you will be on the roads after drinking even a little. Many areas will have organizations offering free taxi rides on New Year's Eve if you have been drinking. Take advantage of those services. We want all of you to still be with us after the holidays.

Mission > Self,
Raymond Wyatt
"Ghost Rider"
2017 Southern Route Coordinator

Midway Route:

December 9, 2016

Dear RFTW Family:

2017 planning for the Midway Route is coming along, hats and equipment have been ordered, hotel list is nearly complete and should be ready for January 1, 2017.

I will be sending out the itinerary to the state coordinators within the next couple of days, so that they will be able to look it over and make sure that their information is correct.

I hope this year has been a good one for you and that this holiday season finds you happy and healthy. My year has been a fun year and I hope yours was as well.

I would like to wish each of you a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year and lots of love, joy and happiness.

Sincerely,
Mark "Diesel" Breland
Honor Them All

MERCHANDISE TRAILERS

The RFTW merchandise trailers should be open for the RFTW Family at the host hotel in Ontario on Saturday afternoon, May 13. They will be open all day Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, but not Wednesday morning, as the trailers have to get on the road ahead of the pack so they can be at each stop ahead of the RFTW Family to set up. Each route's merchandise trailers will set up every day along their route.

MISSING MAN FORMATION:

2017 Midway Route:

The Missing Man Formation for the 2017 Midway Route is coordinated through Glenn Waggoner Jr., aka "Wombat," who has been on the RFTW the past 16 years. Riding in the "Missing Man Formation" is an honor and a humbling tribute to past or present military members. You do not have to have a military background to ride in this formation, only willingness to honor military personnel, family, or loved ones.

The "MMF" Midway Route has 35 openings of various mileages departing from Ontario, CA until the last departure from Quantico, VA. Riders are expected to contact the MMF Coordinator indicating their desire to participate and the date of preference per the route stops and schedule.

Please, when making request, indicate if you have a two wheel or three wheel motorcycle, or a trailer or sidecar attached. We welcome all riders and passengers, but safety is vital to everyone riding in the Missing Man Formation.

Contact Glenn as soon as possible by either e-mail (1buffalolvr@gmail.com) or by cell phone at (951) 990-1873. Once the preferred date is selected, then confirmation will be made by an email reply to the participant. If all the slots are not filled by the departure date, riders will be solicited on an "as-needed" basis at the Route Coordinator's discretion, with preference going to FNGs. Participants are contacted by their cell phones to prepare for the day's departure either the evening before or by announcement at morning meetings.

Gratefully,
Glenn "Wombat" Waggoner Jr.,
1buffalolvr@gmail.com
(951) 990-1873

ONTARIO PRE-RUN ACTIVITIES

(Some of these times may change; verify this info in the April newsletter or in your Route's Itinerary)

TUESDAY MAY 12, 2015

8:30 am	Staging for Riverside National Cemetery Run in rear Radisson Hotel parking lot.
9:00-9:30 am	Rider's Meeting for Riverside National Cemetery Run at Radisson Hotel tennis courts.
5:00 - 7:00 pm	DINNER- Meet & Greet Main Ballroom. ALL RIDERS attendance requested
6:00 pm	Presentation of Combat Heroes Bike Build Project in Main Ballroom.

DC ACTIVITIES

FRIDAY, MAY 26

RFTW BOD Ceremony and Awards Presentation

The Awards Presentation will be held at 6 p.m. at the host hotel, Holiday Inn. RFTW participants to attend.

Evening Parade

The U.S. Marines Friday Evening Parade will be Friday night, May 26, in Washington, D.C. For the past eight years we have had reserved seating for RFTW. The Parade consists of the world-famous Marine Silent Drill Team, The Commandant's Drum and Bugle Corps, and the President's Own Marine Band.

Doug "Sgt. Major" Lyvere reserves seats for RFTW each year. This hasn't been finalized yet, but Doug will have all the details for the April issue, so put this date on your must-do list for D.C.

SATURDAY, MAY 27

Arlington National Cemetery

Every year RFTW is allowed to take 400 motorcycles into Arlington National Cemetery. Participants must be FNGs, either as rider or passenger. Staging is 9:45 a.m. Saturday, May 27, 2017 at the parking garage of the host hotel, Holiday Inn. Either the rider or passenger must be an FNG. Depart for ANC at 10:45 a.m.

Group Photo

The annual RFTW group photo will be taken on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Meet there on Saturday, May 27 at 1:50 p.m. Information on purchasing a copy of the photo will be available on www.RFTW.us.

RFTW Plaque Placement

The RFTW Mission Accomplished plaque presentation at the Vietnam Memorial Wall will be held at 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, May 27.

Dinner Invitation

Campers at the Arlington Assembly of God are invited to a dinner at 6 p.m. Saturday. Any riders who wish to partake in this dinner are also invited. However, this is not an official RFTW event.

SUNDAY, MAY 28

Rolling Thunder

Those participating in Rolling Thunder must stage at 6 a.m. Staging site will be announced later. Bring cameras, lots of water and snacks. 6:30 a.m. Rolling Thunder participants depart for the Pentagon North Parking Lot (staging for Rolling Thunder Parade). Parade begins at noon.

► WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

MANDATORY FNG BRIEFINGS

All FNGs are required to attend special briefings for those riding with RFTW for the first time. These meetings are very important. You may have been riding for 40 years, but riding with RFTW is very different. It's important for your safety and everyone else's that you attend the briefing to learn how you're expected to ride in tight formation. Please make a special note of your route's FNG briefing day and time.

If you don't start with RFTW in Ontario, you will be at a disadvantage as an FNG, and therefore it's even more important that you attend all morning briefings, which ALL riders are required to do.

HOW WE RIDE

By Colin Campbell (2009)

Run For The Wall follows a very regimented set of rules developed over the years to provide for the safe travel of this large contingency on its way to Washington DC and *The Vietnam Veterans Memorial*. Foremost in our desire for safety is that every rider become adept and comfortable riding in accordance with these rules. If for any reason you are not comfortable riding in this manner, please discontinue your ride with the column. If you are not capable *and* comfortable riding —like we ride, you could pose a danger to yourself and your companions by attempting to ride in a tight formation. Above all, if a maneuver looks too dangerous or awkward for a rider (particularly a new rider) to complete safely, he or she should do what needs to be done to protect himself or herself to avoid an accident.

The rules are outlined as follows:

Signals:

Right turn: Left arm out and elbow bent up. *Hand making a fist.*

Left turn: Left arm straight out from body. Hand straight out in a fist.



Right turn



Left turn

Slow: Left arm down to side. Press flat palm up and down parallel to the ground imitating a braking motion.

Speed up: Pump left fist up and down.



**STOP or
Slow down**



Speed UP

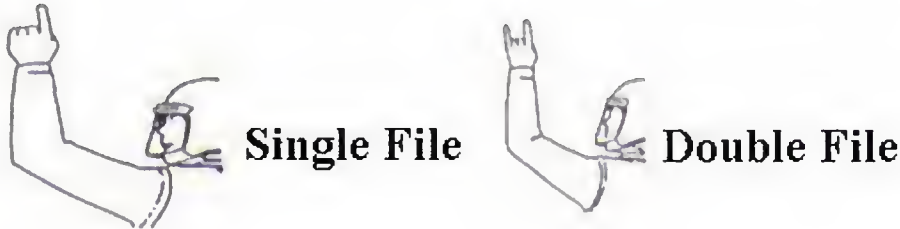
Hazard: Point at the area on the road with your hand and index finger (left or right side).

Close Ranks: Left hand overhead, *open and close fist*.



Staggered Formation: Left arm raised overhead, index finger extended.

Side-by-Side Formation: Left arm raised overhead, index and little finger extended.



Blinker: Left arm out and elbow bent up, thumb and forefinger contacting each other to indicate blinker on.

Slow: Left arm down to side. Press flat palm up and down parallel to the ground imitating a braking motion.

Speed up: Pump left fist up and down.

Hazard: Point at the area on the road with your hand and index finger (left or right side).

Close Ranks: Left hand overhead, *open and close fist*.

Staggered Formation: Left arm raised overhead, index finger extended.

Side-by-Side Formation: Left arm raised overhead, index and little finger extended.

Blinker: Left arm out and elbow bent up, thumb and forefinger contacting each other to indicate blinker on.

Distance Interval: 2 seconds. Visual marker for distance interval is one empty center stripe between cycles at 50 to 60 mph and two empty center stripes between cycles above 60. When in a *side by side* formation, the left side rider is responsible for maintaining the correct interval. The right side rider is responsible for aligning himself with the left side rider. Riders' shoulders should be directly across from each other in the proper configuration. Every rider is responsible for maintaining the correct interval in a *staggered formation*.

Deceleration: Unless a complete stop or an emergency stop is anticipated, riders should decelerate by rolling off the throttle and down shifting rather than braking. The appearance of brake lights in the formation increases the incidence of dangerous —rubber banding—. Rubber banding (excessive acceleration and deceleration) increases accidents, wear and tear on equipment and increases rider fatigue. Increasing and decreasing speed should be accomplished utilizing small, incremental throttle rollon and rolloff. Maintaining interval and position requires VERY slight throttle adjustments on an almost constant basis. Rapid acceleration and deceleration is very undesirable and should be avoided.

Riding the Zipper: The centerline and the fog line are lovingly called the *zipper*. It's simple: do not have any part of your cycle or body beyond the zipper. If you do, road guards will hate you and semis will kill you. **Just Say No** to hanging foot pegs, handlebars, or anything else over the zipper.

Sky Popping: Whales stick their head out of the sea just to the level of their eye to —take a look around—. This is called —Sky Popping—. Sticking out of your lane to see what's ahead is a great way to shorten your trip. Road guards travel much faster than the columns both in the left hand lane and on the right shoulder. Pulling out in front of one is a disaster for both riders. **Just Say No** to —sky popping—.

Road Guard Courtesy: You may receive signals/directions from road guards during your trip. Please comply immediately with these requests. Please do not take anything personally. Road guards are doing a very difficult job and are protecting our safety: Your cooperation is paramount to their success. At times, road guards need to pull into a column or pass through a column. When a road guard signals he needs in, immediately slow and give them the right of way. If you collide with a road guard, it is your fault—no questions asked.

Divebombing: Pulling in too close after passing a vehicle is called —dive bombing—. This is a —no-no—. Trucks that are passed by the column should be given at least *one truck length* before riders pull back into their lane. Pulling in too quickly causes the truck driver to hit his brakes and makes them angry with us rather than being our fans. **No divebombing.** The same situation is true when the column moves into the left lane to pass slower moving traffic. At times there may be vehicles traveling in the left lane preventing the entire column from gaining access to the left lane as a unit. Do not speed around one of these vehicles and divebomb in front of them just to maintain your position within the column. Slow, pull in behind such a vehicle and rejoin the column after you have successfully passed the slower traffic in the right lane.

Passing Signals Back. Please pass signals from the platoon leaders all the way back down the column. When you receive a signal, check your rearview mirror to make sure it was passed back.

CB Radio Etiquette: There will be a designated communication channel. Please do not talk on this channel unless you are performing an official function. All riders are welcome and encouraged to monitor the communication channel, but please maintain radio discipline.

RUN Q&A

Q. How fast does the pack ride?

A. A general guideline: the pack will ride at about five miles an hour below the posted speed limit. There will be times when the speeds will be less.

Q. How does the pack enter the highway?

A. We work with local and state authorities to aid our entrance onto the highways. The lead element will slowly enter the highway and maintain a slow speed as the pack follows. There is no reason to ride fast to "catch up" with the pack. The lead element continues a slow speed until the last man vehicle reports he/she is on the highway. At that point the Route Coordinator will slowly increase speed in five mile per hour increments at the rate of about 23 mph increase per minute. This increase is given to the Assistant Route Coordinator who is leading the 1st Platoon, who will then slowly bring the pack to the assigned speed. The Platoon Leaders will follow suit, and are responsible for maintaining the proper distance. As you can see, there is no reason to ride faster than the speed limit follow these guidelines and the platoons will bring you up to speed properly and reduce "rubber banding."

Q. When will itineraries be available?

A. Daily itineraries will be finalized and posted a few weeks prior to departure. Please understand the incredible amount of work that must be finalized before this information is locked down. The notices and itineraries will be posted to the website.

Q. How do I reserve my spot in the pack?

A. There are no reservations of riding spots in the pack. We ride two columns, side by side as conditions allow, and positions in the pack likely adjust as we do fuel stops. If you want to ride near someone ride in front or behind them, not to their side as those positions will adjust if riders fall out of formation.

Q. How much does it cost to go All the Way?

A. Cost of lodging, meals and gas to ride All the Way is largely a matter of personal preference. If you camp, some sites are free or reduced prices. Hotels will be indicated on our Route Schedule and we often get a modest group discount from the standard rack rate. Gas is sometimes provided by supporters, but given the current state of gas prices, the level of future support cannot be certain. Most meals are provided free by local volunteers. Also, allow enough funds for emergency repairs and maintenance of your vehicle.

Q. Can I ride with the Run in my car?

A. Our number one goal is safety of the Run participants and the public. Personal vehicles can travel a few miles ahead or behind the pack, but cannot intermingle with the pack at any time. Due to limited space at most of our gas stops we ask you proceed to another station or skip a gas stop. Our gas stops range are spaced from 70 to 114 miles apart so —cages will not need gas as often as the pack.

Q. Do I have to ride a certain brand of bike?

A. No, all bikes are welcome as long as they are safe, licensed and insured in accordance with your state's laws. If you go All the Way you will likely ride more than 5,800 miles depending on your hometown. Be sure your bike is up to a ride of this length, and allow for routine maintenance during the trip. Plan for tire and oil changes as appropriate.

Q. What special skills are needed to ride with the pack?

A. Riding with the pack requires good motorcycle handling skills, and you must be a competent, safe rider. Courses such as the Motorcycle Safety Foundation's Experienced (Advanced) Rider's Course will help you sharpen your existing skills.

MINOR CHILDREN

If you are traveling with a minor child, you must have a notarized letter of consent stating that child has permission to participate in RFTW signed by **both** parents and or legal guardians. RFTW will keep that letter, so you should have two letters so you will have a letter for after the run.

CHASE VEHICLE POLICY

Please note that the term "motorcycle" applies to any Run vehicles that can be safely loaded and transported on a chase trailer.

1. Chase trailers are provided only as outlined below. They are not to be used to transport personal property including functional motorcycles, motorcycle trailers or luggage.
2. RFTW will make reasonable attempts to assist riders with incapacitated bikes, but there are no guarantees this service will always be available. (There may be times when the trailers are full and the rider will either have to wait or make their own arrangements.)
3. Chase vehicles will provide free service for motorcycles broken down or incapacitated in case of an accident.

4. Oversized trikes or other vehicles exceeding the capacity of our trailers WILL NOT be transported. Capacity decisions rest with the chase truck driver.
5. Where a motorcycle is incapacitated due to an accident, the bike will be loaded on the trailer with approval from authorities and owner/rider release as appropriate.
6. If the motorcycle needs transported and has a trailer attached, the trailer can be loaded onto the chase trailer with the bike.
7. Assuming the rider is not injured, he/she is responsible for ensuring the bike is tied down safely and appropriately. The chase crews will assist, but ultimately the responsibility for securing bikes rests with the rider. The chase crews will not be responsible for bike damage.
8. In addition to item (7) above, the rider shall secure luggage so that it will not become separated from the bike. Should it be prudent to remove the luggage, it shall be secured to the trailer floor or placed in the truck bed prior to chase truck departure.
9. The chase crews will transport the motorcycle forward along the daily route to the next available dealership where it will be unloaded. The chase vehicle will then depart to catch the Run.
10. The Route Coordinator is the final authority on any questions concerning this matter.

FUEL STOP REMINDER

One thing that is unique to RFTW and particularly stressful to FNGs is our fuel stops. This year all three routes will be pumping only premium, high octane fuel during fuel stops. Pumps will be turned on prior to the arrival of the main pack by members of our Fuel Team. You will pull up to the pumps two at a time side by side. Shut off your bike and have \$1's and \$5's in a pocket or tankbag, easily accessible.

The amount of fuel put in your tank will be rounded up to the nearest dollar. For example: if your bike takes \$6.37 of fuel, the fueler will ask you for \$7; please have the exact amount of bills ready. The excess amount goes to fuel our Chase Vehicles, which you will appreciate if you need them along the way. Do not ask for change, and do not argue with the fueler. If you feel a mistake has been made, after staging your bike, take it up with your Platoon Leader; he will follow up for you.

All bikes must fuel first, then stage, then take any restroom or refreshment breaks. This is a process that has evolved over 20-some years and is the safest and most efficient way to fuel this many bikes in a timely manner. Please respect the members of the fuel crew; they have volunteered their time to help make your RFTW experience the best possible.

“ALL THE WAY!”—WHAT IT REALLY MEANS

Some people are not clear on exactly what "All The Way" means. It appears that the perception of "All the Way" is that a participant is starting from some point along the route and riding all the way to Washington, DC. This is not the case (unless your hometown is Ontario, CA). Within the Run For The Wall concept, "All The Way" means that you will be registering and starting the Run in Ontario, CA and riding all the way to Washington, DC. If you go All the Way from Ontario to DC, you are entitled to wear the —All the Way patch. If you start somewhere other than Ontario, you may wear a —Participant patch.

GET YOUR BIKE READY TO GO

By John “Shooter” McCabe (2009)

- ☐ If your tires need changing, change them now. If tires are good, check inflation just before we leave; have a tire pressure gage on hand.
- ☐ Change the oil just before leaving.

- ☐ Check all lights and have extra bulbs on hand.
- ☐ Check suspension air lines (for air shocks).
- ☐ Check operation of all switches; make sure things that should work do.
- ☐ If you have spoke wheels, get them checked at the dealer for spoke tension!
- ☐ Change air and fuel filters.
- ☐ Check brake and hydraulic clutch fluid levels.
- ☐ Check clutch and brake cables.
- ☐ Check every bolt, nut, screw you can get to, make sure things are tight.
- ☐ Check your luggage, make sure straps are not rotted or torn. (I have dodged sleeping bags, small luggage bags and other things falling off bikes...not fun for Road Guards at 90+mph)
- ☐ Make sure your bike is ready. If nothing else, take it to a dealer and have them go over it for you. The money you spend there will not compare to the funds it will cost you if things go wrong and you are 3500 miles from home.
- ☐ Make SURE you are ready, get the bike out and practice speed control at 65 mph by easy throttle movements NOT brakes. Practice slow maneuvering; we all know how to ride at highway speeds but it's those slow maneuvers we will be needing that may need to be honed a bit. Remember, we will be maneuvering in close proximity to other bikes (68 inches between bikes at times)—be ready for it.
- ☐ If you plan on riding two up, take a few rides two up and practice rider and driver communications. If you are a rider, your eyes are just as important as the driver's in a close formation ride. You are NOT a sightseer—you are part of the overall bike safety team. Our Road Guards' job starts the morning you all get to the parking lot at the truck stop. When you come into the lot there at Rancho Cucamonga, please go SLOW, and tell the Road Guards which route you will be taking so we can get you to the proper lines. Have your gas tank FULL. Recheck your luggage one last time—make sure it's tight and secured on your bike. There will be a bunch of riders, bikes, media, and normal traffic in that parking lot so be careful and keep your head up.

FLAG PROTOCOL FOR BIKES AND CARS

By Steve "Hawgwash" Hill

As we get closer and closer to RFTW I thought I'd share a little protocol for those desiring to display the American Flag, POWMIA Flag, Service Flags, or even your own State Flags. I hope that all riders will display flags on their bikes in addition to those driving support vehicles and other 4wheelers.

Let's start with the American Flag. It is always displayed to the Flag's own right in the direction of movement. In other words, if displayed on the back of a motorcycle it will be on the right side as the motorcycle is moving. On a 4-wheeler, it will be on the right side of the vehicle. When displayed with multiple flags, the order of precedence is American Flag, POWMIA Flag (a position of honor directly adjacent to the American Flag), followed by State Flags and finally Service Flags in the following order: Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard.

In the event multiple flags are flown, the American Flag may be in the center position provided it is on a higher staff than the other flags. If the flag is displayed on a flat surface, the blue field is to the viewer's upper left (whether vertical or horizontal).

Remember, we are on a mission and part of that mission is to proudly display the flags that so many of us have fought hard to protect.

WHAT TO PACK FOR THE RUN

Lots of FNGs have asked for suggestions on what to bring on Run for the Wall. Tailor your checklist to your own personal needs—you may want to bring additional items, you may want to leave some things at home.

Motorcycles

American & POWMIA Flags for bike
T-bag and/or saddle bags
Water bottle ("sport" bottle or "Camelback")
Bungee Cords (lots of 'em)
Duct Tape
Tool kit
Regular & allen wrenches
Screwdrivers
Spark plugs & wrench
Wire ties, zip ties
Shop rags
WD 40
Clamps
Rope
Jumper cables
Funnel
Can of Fixaflat
Tire repair kit
Replacement light bulbs
Fuses
Super glue
6' of 1/4" plastic hose or turkey baster (to siphon gas)

Dog tags for emergency identification
Emergency info: Next of kin, home and work phone numbers, doctors' phone numbers, list of prescriptions
Warm knit cap for under helmet and/or sleeping
Heavy jacket
Lightweight jacket
Chaps
Warm gloves
Summer gloves
Rain Gear (jacket, pants and galoshes)
Laundry detergent (in heavy ziplock bag)
Small sewing kit
Money
Credit Cards/Traveler's Checks
Driver's License
Insurance information
Padlock
Trash Bags for covering T-Bag in rain, laundry, etc.
Ziplock bags (all sizes) organizes & keeps stuff dry
Extra pair of boots
Jeans (2or 3 pairs)
T-shirts (at least 6)

► FNG STORIES

A PILGRIMAGE AND A MISSION

By Elizabeth Ducky” Picray
Columbia, MO

I had heard about Run For The Wall from my fellow Legion Riders, but for nearly three years after leaving the Navy I could barely walk, much less ride any significant distance. In 2014, I followed my brother John “Opie” Picray, Paul “Bugle Boy” Hobbs and David “Duke” Bentley west as they headed for California ... in my sedan, with my civilian sister in the passenger seat. We promptly became the group baggage wagon. We joined the Run in Rancho Cucamonga, CA and I proudly pinned my FNG button on my vest. The next ten days were emotionally turbulent, to say the least. I left every Run stop either ahead of the pack (preferably), or way behind it so as not to get fouled in the following traffic. Consequently, I missed a lot of the experience of the Run that year. I swore I would never “cage it” again. Two crucial parts of my experience were great, however. We camped nearly the entire trip, and I made several friends! Rick “Dragger” Behymer proudly carried me into Arlington on his passenger seat.

After physical therapy, I realized riding my motorcycle worked out the same muscles, and embarked on a personal mission to avoid having to do those nasty exercises again. As a result, I was able to ride further than ever before. I made plans to redo my FNG experience on two wheels in 2015 with a Navy sister, who would be going for her FNG Run. We were so excited! We rolled out half a day behind schedule, headed for Ontario, CA. That last day of travel was brutal! We rolled for nearly 18 hours, from Gallup to Ontario. Finally, we arrived just in time for a few hours' sleep Tuesday morning.

My friend was on a trike, so she was in a different platoon than I was. Electing for a staggered platoon, Boomer put me in Platoon 7 under Brush's capable leadership. I would learn later that all my friends from 2014 were in Platoon 8. Day six from Wentzville to Corydon, I tapped out because I was too sleepy to safely ride with others. Leaving the ramp in Evansville, IN, I was trailing the pack when we rolled past a trike flipped into the median. Don't stop! Keep rolling, get out of the way! I spent the next 82 miles praying it wasn't my friend, and that whoever it was would be ok. When I got to Corydon, IN, I had a voicemail from my friend's husband that it had been her, and that she was in the hospital and he was on his way there. The chaplains mobbed me the second I got off the phone, and my camping friends (especially Bounce) took it from there. I put on my best military bearing, ate my dinner as quickly as I could, and set up camp. The next morning, it hit me hard. I was a basket case. Everybody says they have problems with "darned allergies" on the Run; not me. I was crying my eyes out inside my helmet at 65 mph. Again, not safe for others to ride with, so I trailed the Pack again.

When Platoon 7 (consisting mostly of HD's) went 2 up, my little Honda Shadow 750 couldn't quite manage it due to the difference in gearing, so I transferred to Platoon 8, the "Crazy 8's" with my camping friends. What a difference! 7 was good to me, but 8 was like family! Thanks to Brush's daily instructions, I had no problems at all keeping my intervals in a group of mostly metric bikes. We rode proudly into D.C. at a 2-foot interval, shifting like mad several times per minute! I learned the hard way not to ever again buy gloves that had a seam across the thumb pad. When we got to the host hotel, one of the bartenders kindly let me bury my left hand in an ice pan.

I'm glad I went in the sedan in 2014, since it taught me what to expect, but I probably won't do it again if I can help it. I much prefer being part of the Pack! By the end of the 2015 Run I was living on 5-hour energy shots and Black Black caffeine gum, but it was glorious agony. I came home and slept for a week. It took another week to get most of the feeling back in my hands!

My brother has described the Run as a pilgrimage, and that's exactly what it is: it is sacrificing the comfort of normal life, enduring sometimes harsh weather, and jumping out into the unknown. It is also a mission: learning to trust yourself and your machine, covering the flank of the rider next to you against traffic, and trusting the riders around you to do the same.

When it all comes together, seeing your platoon stretching out in front of you, sweeping through curves in that one gloriously perfect moment of synchronized harmony is a sight that will imprint itself directly on your heart. It will also put the biggest grin on your face to remember it when you get home, show up in sweatpants around other motorcyclists, and get asked, "Do you ride?"

I don't just ride anymore, I Run!

Why Are You Here?

By Kristen Ranker

Connellsville, PA

I had the privilege of joining this run for the first time this year. An idea that was planted in my mind in 2015 from a few gentlemen I had met during Rolling Thunder had me traveling across the country with no idea what exactly I was about to get myself into—only the promise that it was an adventure that would open my eyes to many things, especially the treatment of our military service people.

I had a basic concept as I watched it and read about it numerous times, but this was entirely different and was worth the time I spent getting to know this group. Tough, rigid, well organized and yet kind, caring, and complete awareness of why this run means so much to so many. While on this trip, I had a rider ask me ... why are you here? You aren't even military. I wondered the same thing at first. But after several days and numerous conversations with others ... it came down to this. I may not be military but I believe that every individual that has made the commitment to protect and serve this country and the people who live here takes tremendous courage and shows tremendous bravery and sacrifice on so many levels. Because of that I am in awe and believe that these same individuals deserve my utmost respect and gratitude. It's up to me how to show it and this event is a perfect way to do that.

I wondered why I was doing this as I sat on my bike that morning in Ontario CA. The answer ... we ride for those who can't. 2017 is fast approaching and I already feel the anticipation building. I am looking forward to meeting more wonderful people and being part of something that makes a difference with all who have sacrificed.

A JINXED FIRST RUN

By Hal DePuy

Port Lavaca, Texas

My name is Harold DePuy, road name "Grumpy." I am a retired Army Sergeant First Class and VietNam veteran. It was a dream to do the Run For The Wall someday. Funds were always short and Patriot Guard missions were a priority. In 2013 I was told to get off the Harley due to health problems. So I sold the Harley and prepared to spend my time at home doing much of nothing.

I was talking to some friends one day, and they suggested I get a trike. Well, I knew I could never afford a Harley trike and didn't really see myself on a Can Am. So I figured I would look around for parts and build a VW trike. I thought it would take about two years to build. One day I dragged a transaxle in my garage, and the build was on. Eight months later the trike was finished and registered. Over the next couple of years changes were made to upgrade the trike, including a new 1776cc engine.

The 2016 RFTW was coming into Las Cruces N.M and I went to Barnett Harley Davidson to greet them as I had done for several years before. But that day I told myself I had to go with them no matter what. The trike was ready and so was I. So that evening I packed with the help of my wife and son, and at 4 a.m. I was headed back to Las Cruces. I registered and was welcomed as never before by several of riders and was assigned to the 9th platoon. Eventually I ended up at the back of the pack because the performance cam and big carburetor put out a high amount of exhaust fumes. I didn't care, I was doing the Run For The Wall. I was actually living my dream.

I had no rooms reserved, and saw the Southern Route book for the first time that morning. I was as fresh an FNG as you could get. I learned real quick what I needed to do with Road Guards encouraging me along the way. The tail gunners were tolerating the gas fumes. My wife got the itinerary from the internet, and she was booking rooms the whole way.

We made it to Monroe LA at the City Hall wreath laying. We were leaving and the trike had a short when I went to start it. The ignition and starter burned up. Bill from the Shriners came to my rescue. We had the trike back on the road by 6 p.m. I thought I was good to go for the rest of the mission, but that was only the start of many challenges that lay ahead of me. Coming into Chattanooga, number 3 spark plug blew out of the engine. And forgetting to put the trike in gear caused it to get away from me and roll down the steep bank. I had to dune buggy the thing back up the bank with three cylinders. The support truck hauled the trike to Thunder Creek Harley Davidson where the service manager called for help since they don't do VWs. Stateline Wagons came to the rescue. They hauled the trike to their shop and had me on the road again the next day. Coming into Roanoke Va. just short of D-Day memorial I broke an exhaust valve spring. It was repaired, but I had missed the D-Day memorial. I pressed on to Lynchburg. By this time several riders were commenting about how determined I was to make it to D.C.

Well, we rolled into Arlington on schedule. I stayed in D.C. for three days before heading back. On my return trip back to El Paso, TX, I burned a hole in the number 3 piston. I was dead in the water. I called the guys at State Line, and Nick said to get a room and he will send a truck to get me and the trike. The next day the truck showed up, and we went to Chattanooga where they pulled the engine out and replaced it with a brand new engine. I wanted to cry. How can these guys be so kind to someone they barely met. What true Americans! They kicked me out without charging me a dime.

The rest of the trip home was great, with no problems. I missed a lot of stops from all the breakdowns, but the bottom line is, I made it!!! Plans are in place to make the run again in 2017—this time on a Harley Street Glide. I plan to see the guys at State Line again and thank them. And next year I will start the run in Ontario CA. The trike will have to sit this one out. Is it May yet?

► OTHER STORIES

MOTORCYCLE GROUP HOLDS COAT DRIVE FOR RAINELLE RESIDENTS

By Justin McLennan, WVVA Multimedia Journalist - Beckley newsroom

RAINELLE, WV (WVVA) - On the eve of the four month anniversary of the deadly flooding in Greenbrier County, a group of bikers made their way to Rainelle to repay the town for the love it had shown them nearly three decades earlier.

The scene at Rainelle Elementary School Saturday afternoon was one all too familiar to residents affected by the June flood.

"We knew that sooner or later they were gonna need coats," Jenny Ward said. "It gets cold up here."



Ward is a participant and rider with “Run for the Wall.”

The motorcycle group is made up mostly of veterans, riding in honor of those who lost their lives serving their country.

210 jackets, 253 hats and 200 pairs of gloves were distributed to Rainelle children by bikers who fell in love with the town 28 years ago, when the group was unable to go through the toll plazas on the turnpike.

"When the first group of 15 bikers came through for Run for the Wall, Rainelle took them in, they fed them lunch, they over-nighted here," she said.

"As the years went through, they still over-nighted here they had lunch here, they played with the kids and they developed a real strong bond, and that love affair has continued ever since."

And when some riders with Run for the Wall brought relief supplies to the town in July, Jenny and her husband got an idea.

"We came out, we toured the damage," she said. "One thing we didn't see was any winter coats for the kids."

It's a warm gesture, that won't soon be forgotten.

WOMAN WARRIOR OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION



Deborah Sampson: Revolutionary War Combat Veteran.

Deborah Sampson was born on December 17, 1760 in Plympton, Massachusetts to Johnathan Sampson, Jr. and Deborah Bradford. Bradford was a direct descendant of the Mayflower pilgrim, William Bradford, and Johnathan Sampson, Jr. was a direct descendant of the Mayflower pilgrims Miles Standish as well as John Alden.

Deborah Sampson was the oldest of seven children. The Sampson family lived in poverty due to Johnathan Sampson, Jr.'s, bad luck and lack of business skills.

Sampson's father abandoned his family, and unable to provide for her children, Sampson's mother had to place her children in the homes of various relatives and friends. At the age of ten, Deborah Sampson was then hired out as an indentured servant to the family of Jeremiah and Susannah Thomas. Jeremiah Thomas was a patriot who heavily influenced Sampson's political opinions and education.

After she was released from indentured servitude at the age of 18, she worked as a local school teacher during summer sessions in 1779 and 1780 in Middleboro. In the winter of 1781, Sampson began feeling restless and wanted to travel and explore other pursuits. Knowing that her options as a young woman were limited, she came up with the idea of cross-dressing as a man. She sewed herself a man's coat, waistcoat, and purchased a pair of men's shoes, hat and other items.

It was during this time that Sampson got the idea to instead join the military as a male soldier, and in 1781, at the age of 21 and disguised as a man, Deborah Sampson enlisted in the 4th Massachusetts Regiment during the Revolutionary War under the name Robert Shurtliff.

Sampson was wounded in battle twice: shot through the thigh during a battle in 1781 (she removed the bullet herself) and shot again through the shoulder four months later. Sampson's true identity wasn't discovered until 1783, when she was hospitalized with a fever. After several years of campaigning, Deborah Sampson was awarded a pension in 1805 and eventually won a general service pension in 1821.

For more information: <http://historyofmassachusetts.org/deborah-sampson-woman-warrior-of-the-american-revolution/>

WWII VET RALPH L. ROSSMAN

Flipping through photographs and telegrams and handling bits of artillery shrapnel that earned him a Purple Heart, Ralph L. Rossman took time on 24 NOV to recall his service during World War II. Rossman, 95, of Normal, was 21 years old when the Army drafted him in November 1942. "I served for three years, one month and 23 days," said Rossman, proving his sharp memory.

The seventh of eight siblings, Rossman left his home in rural Minonk shortly after his brother was drafted. He completed basic training at Camp Blanding in Florida and was in camps throughout the U.S., including posts in Tennessee, Indiana and Boston. "In February of 1944, I boarded the S.S. Argentina in Boston with 5,000 troops," said Rossman. "We left on Lincoln's birthday, Feb. 12, and landed in Scotland on Washington's birthday, Feb. 22."



After a train ride from Scotland to Bognor Regis along the English Channel, Rossman's unit first stayed in civilians' houses because the barracks were full. "They were afraid Germany was going to cross the Channel, so they kept us there for a while," he said.

While there, the company commander told Rossman's unit it was going to maneuver with an incoming armored unit. When the trucks rolled in the next day, Rossman realized it was his brother Wilbert's unit. "I hadn't seen him for two years. I asked the driver right away if he knew where my brother was and he said he'd holler for him," said Rossman. Before he could even return to camp to set his tent for the night, Rossman said his brother had rushed to find him. "It was quite a reunion for us, being that far away from home for so long," he said. Rossman recalls Gen. Dwight Eisenhower and British Army Commander Bernard Montgomery

visiting his camp to see if troops were prepared for their first round of combat. "They cheered us on a little bit," said Rossman.

Rossman's Memorabilia including his shrapnel dented dog tag His first action was the Battle of Normandy at Omaha Beach on June 14, 1944, eight days after D-Day. "They had soldiers on this British ship with small assault boats filled with a dozen people. They put troops down in the water," said Rossman. "We got in the water and could just wade in. Some guys just didn't stand a chance because the water was too high.

We were lucky, being on land at the beach. It felt real, then." While fighting in St. Jean de Daye in Normandy, Rossman was hit in the crook of his right shoulder by shrapnel from an artillery shell. "All I can remember is a couple of tanks burning up and shrapnel flying everywhere," he said. "I was paralyzed from the waist down." He vaguely remembers a buddy, who he still speaks with today, lying him down and sprinkling sulfa powder in his wound to prevent infection.

He was retrieved by medics who dressed his wounds and flown back to England for surgery. The feeling returned to his body. The shrapnel had clipped through his dog tag chain and a holy metal chain he wore from his mother. "Here I am at 95. My mother probably wore out her rosary. Somebody up above was watching out for me," he said. Rossman received the Purple Heart for his efforts in Normandy. He still has the twisted pieces of shrapnel taken from his shoulder along with other WWII mementos from his service, including the telegram informing his mother he had been wounded, photos from down time, his uniform and foreign coins. After working in the 14th base Post Office in France, he returned to the U.S. in 1945. "I remember when we were landing in Brooklyn, flying right past the Statue of Liberty and thinking, 'Oh my God, we made it,'" he said.

Rossman began working for the Minonk Post Office, married his wife, Bernadette, and had two daughters before moving to Normal. The couple has been married 60 years. In 2012, he took the Land of Lincoln Honor Flight to Washington, D.C., with his daughter, Theresa Weldy. More than 70 years after his service, Rossman said being in WWII has affected his view of patriotism in a few ways. "You wonder. Why do we have all this fighting? Why can't we do good for people instead of finding more reasons to fight war? It's hard to say," he said. "It makes you feel proud that people still remember you on Veterans Day. It's a duty we all did back then."

[Source: The Pantagraph via AP | Julia Evelsizer | November 29, 2016 ++]

WWII VET Lauren Bruner—USS Arizona Survivor

In 1941 Lauren Bruner was getting ready for church on his battleship, the USS Arizona, when the alarm sounded. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor had begun, and Bruner, then 21, scampered up five stories by ladder to the enormous anti-aircraft guns he was responsible for manning. But bullets hit his left leg and explosions set off by the Sunday morning bombardment rocked his ship before he could get to the weapons. The ship sank just nine minutes later. Bruner escaped, but suffered severe burns.



Back then Bruner didn't know who was attacking until the planes got close enough for him to see the red Rising Sun Japanese insignia on their sides. The aircraft shot at "everything in sight," he said. Then an explosion tore through his battle station. "That's where the flames blew right through and cooked me right there," Bruner said in a telephone interview from his home in La Mirada, California. With "everything burning," Bruner tried to get off the ship as fast as he could. But the water in the harbor 80 feet below — infused with leaked oil — was on fire, too, so jumping wasn't an option. Bruner and a few fellow shipmates shouted to a sailor on the ship moored next to the Arizona to toss over some rope. The six of them tied the rope and carried themselves hand-over-hand across the 100-foot expanse to the USS Vestal. "You're like a chicken getting barbecued," he said. All of them made it, becoming six of the 335 sailors and Marines on the Arizona to survive. Another 1,177 shipmates died. Most are still entombed in the wreckage.

Due to his burns, Lauren spent 7 months in a hospital, where they would soak his hands in brine water and then peel off the dead skin and then soak them in alcohol. After recovering, Lauren was given orders to the USS Coghlan, DD-606 and participated in eight major engagements. The USS Coghlan was decommissioned in 1945.

He was transferred to the USS Duluth, CL-87 in Shanghai, China where he served until his discharge in late 1946 at a rank of Chief Fire Controlman.

► VA NEWS

SERVICE CONNECTION TO PARKINSON'S

The Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims recently issued a decision acknowledging the "facility-wide" use of herbicides at Fort McClellan, Alabama. The Court reversed a Board of Veterans Appeals decision that denied a veteran service connection for Parkinson's disease due to herbicide exposure at Fort McClellan. The VA must now grant service connection for Parkinson's disease. This is the first Court reversal of a Board decision for a Fort McClellan herbicide exposure case. This ruling has the potential to impact the outcomes of other Fort McClellan-Veteran herbicide exposure cases.

Despite the VA acknowledging that there was "facility-wide" use of herbicides at Fort McClellan, and that the VA considers Parkinson's disease associated with herbicide exposure, it denied service connection stating the veteran's exposure was "routine." The Court found the Board had no basis in law to deny benefits to a veteran simply because the application of herbicides was "routine." The Court reversed the Board's decision, meaning the VA must award the Veteran service connection for Parkinson's disease.

This is the first Court reversal of a Board decision for a Fort McClellan herbicide exposure case. This ruling has the potential to impact the outcomes of other Fort McClellan-Veteran herbicide exposure cases.

VA PRESUMPTIVE AGENT ORANGE DISEASES

With 2016 drawing to a close and a new presidential administration poised to take over, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs faces an array of decisions related to the herbicide Agent Orange, which contained the toxic chemical dioxin and was used to kill vegetation during the Vietnam War. Among them are:

1. Whether to expand the list of diseases that are presumed to be linked to Agent Orange. In the past, the VA has found enough evidence to link 14 health conditions, including various cancers, to Agent Orange exposure. In March, a federal panel of scientific experts said there is now evidence to suggest that Agent Orange exposure may be linked to bladder cancer and hypothyroidism. It also confirmed, as previous experts have said, that there is some evidence of an association with hypertension, stroke and various neurological ailments similar to Parkinson's Disease. Since then, a VA-led study has found stronger evidence to link hypertension, more commonly known as high blood pressure, to Agent Orange exposure. But high blood pressure is common as people age, so compensating veterans for the condition could be expensive. If the VA adds those conditions to its list of diseases connected to Agent Orange, anyone who has them and who stepped foot in Vietnam—even for a day—could be eligible for disability payments from the VA. The VA had planned to make decisions this year, initially as early as August, before the election. But in a recent statement, the agency said, "For this administration, the deadline for proposing new rules for potential new presumptions (of service connection) has passed and this will become work for the new administration to take to completion."
2. Whether to make naval veterans who served off the coast of Vietnam eligible for benefits. Though most didn't step foot in Vietnam, some 90,000 Navy vets who served offshore may have been exposed to the Agent Orange and are seeking benefits. Advocates for the so-called Blue Water Navy veterans have been asking the VA for more than a decade to broaden the policy to include them. They say that they were exposed to Agent Orange because their ships sucked in potentially contaminated water and distilled it for showering, drinking, laundry and cooking. Experts have said the distillation process could have actually concentrated the Agent Orange.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims in April 2015 struck down VA rules that denied compensation for sailors whose ships docked at certain harbors in South Vietnam, including Da Nang. Those ports, the court determined, may have been in the Agent Orange spraying area. The court ordered the VA to review its policy. But in February, the VA largely stood by its old policy and once again asserted that there's no scientific justification or legal requirement for covering veterans who served off the coast. A bill in Congress to change that had 336 sponsors in the House and 47 in the Senate. But it did not become law. Advocates have said they will try again.

3. Whether to extend coverage to service members who served along the Korean demilitarized zone during the Vietnam War and who say they were exposed, as well. Herbicides were not used exclusively in Vietnam. The VA currently provides benefits for Agent Orange-related diseases to veterans who served in or near the Korean DMZ between April 1, 1968 and Aug. 31, 1971. Some veterans, backed by several senators and members of Congress, say the start date should be earlier. They cite a declassified January 1969 document that cited use of herbicides in the DMZ for tests that began on Oct. 9, 1967.

"We're not victims, we're not heroes," said Eugene Clarke, the Connecticut veteran pushing for the change. "But we want what we deserve." a letter this month to Rep. Thomas MacArthur (R-NJ) a VA official said the matter was being reviewed. "We take our obligation to research these matters very seriously and will provide you with a more comprehensive response as quickly as we can," Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Benefits Thomas Murphy wrote.

4. Whether veterans' exposure to Agent Orange can affect their descendents. For decades, the Department of Veterans Affairs has collected — and ignored — reams of information that could have helped answer that question, an investigation by ProPublica and The Virginian-Pilot has found. Its

medical staff has physically examined more than 668,000 Vietnam veterans possibly exposed to Agent Orange, documenting health conditions and noting when and where they served. For at least 34 years, the agency also has asked questions about their children's birth defects, before and after the war. A recent ProPublica analysis found that the odds of having a child born with birth defects during or after the war were more than a third higher for veterans who say they handled, sprayed or were directly sprayed with Agent Orange than for veterans who say they weren't exposed or weren't sure. Experts said more research is needed and that the VA should be taking it on.

This month, Congress passed a bill that requires, among other things, that the VA pay for an analysis of all research done thus far on the descendants of veterans with toxic exposure. It also requires the agency to determine the feasibility of future research and, if such studies are possible, to pursue them. The VA said it recently asked the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine to look into whether exposure to Agent Orange could have effects in vets' offspring. It could be a couple of years before any report is issued with recommendations for future research.

[Source: ProPublica & The Virginian-Pilot | Charles Ornstein & Mike Hixenbaugh | December 28, 2016]

VETS BEING STIFFED ON ER BILLS

South Dakota U.S. Senator Mike Rounds (R) is blasting the VA for still refusing to pay for emergency care for veterans at non-VA medical facilities. In his U.S. Senate floor speech on 30 NOV, Rounds highlighted the case of 90-year-old Korean War Veteran Alfred Dimmick of Rapid City. He said Dimmick was twice taken to non-VA facilities for possible heart attacks, because emergency responders didn't want to take a chance with the longer drive to a VA facility. Rounds said Dimmick still owes thousands of dollars because the VA refuses to cover the bills.

"His daughter writes to me that even as frail and ill as Mr. Dimmick is, he wants to know before he dies that his bills are covered, so that he can have peace," said Rounds. Rounds urged the Department of Veterans Affairs to comply with the Veterans' Emergency Care Fairness Act.

On February 1, 2010 the Veterans' Emergency Care Fairness Act (P.L. 111-137) was signed into public law. The Act amends 38 U.S.C. 1725 by changing the definition of personal liability. It removes the disqualifying factor of payment in part by a third party payer and removes one's own automobile reparations coverage from the definition of a health plan contract.

This law is intended to make certain that veterans with private health insurance are covered by the VA if their outside insurance does not cover the full amount of non-VA emergency care. Despite a court case this year, originally brought by a Minnesota veteran, ruling that the VA must pay in such emergency situations, Rounds claimed that it is still refusing to do so. In fact, the VA is appealing the court decision. Over 100,000 claims are now pending on the outcome of that appeal. Go to https://youtu.be/yf8_FT0hdMw to view Sen. Rounds Senate floor speech.

[Source: KELO-AM | Military Times Mark Russo | November 30, 2016 ++]

SEVEN VA COMPENSABLE DISABILITIES TO BE ELIMINATED

Not all service-connected medical conditions and injuries are incurred or exacerbated in the performance of military duties. For example, a qualifying injury can occur when a service member was at home or on

leave, and a qualifying medical condition, such as multiple sclerosis, can develop independently of a service member's military duties. In 2015, VA paid 716,000 veterans a total of \$3.7 billion, the Congressional Budget Office estimates, to compensate for seven of the medical conditions that, according to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), military service is unlikely to cause or aggravate. Those conditions are arteriosclerotic heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), Crohn's disease, hemorrhoids, multiple sclerosis, osteoarthritis, and uterine fibroids.

Beginning in January 2018, this option would cease veterans' disability compensation for those seven medical conditions GAO identified. Under the option, veterans now receiving compensation for those conditions would have their compensation reduced or eliminated, and veterans who applied for compensation for those conditions in the future would not be eligible for it. The option would not alter DoD's disability compensation system, which focuses on fitness for military duties rather than compensation for disabilities. An argument in support of this option is that it would make the disability compensation system for military veterans more comparable to civilian systems. Few civilian employers offer long-term disability benefits, and among those that do, benefits do not typically compensate individuals for all medical problems that developed during employment.

An argument against this option is that military service is not like a civilian job; instead, it confers unique benefits to society and imposes extraordinary risks on service members. By that logic, the pay and benefits that service members receive should reflect the hardships of military life, including compensating veterans who become disabled in any way during their military service.

[Source: U.S. Congressional Budget Office | December 12, 2016++]

PTSD STUDY PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

It only takes about a minute for Dr. Michael Bartoszek to inject a local anesthetic into a bundle of nerves in a patient's neck. But the relatively simple procedure can have a big impact on troops suffering from post-traumatic stress. Bartoszek, a doctor at Womack Army Medical Center, said the treatment - known as a stellate ganglion block—can reduce anxiety, halt nightmares and stop the hyper-vigilance associated with PTSD. The effects are near instantaneous, he said. And they can be long-lasting. But while Bartoszek is sold on the procedure—he's performed 350 for Womack since 2013—the larger medical and scientific community is not.

That's where a new clinical trial, underway at Womack and two other military hospitals, comes in. At Fort Bragg, Tripler Army Medical Center in Hawaii and Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany, officials are hoping to gather data on at least 240 patients to provide the first scientific proof of the procedure's efficacy as a PTSD treatment. The trial involves two procedures, spaced two weeks apart, and two months of monitoring, which includes assessments and focus groups for the patient and family members. The bulk of the trial participants are expected to come from Fort Bragg, which has one of the busiest and largest military medical centers. "This is where the soldiers are," Bartoszek said. "Fort Bragg is very important for Army medicine and the Army as a whole. That makes us the prime site for this."

Since the trial opened in June, not all has gone as expected. Bartoszek said the hospital has had trouble recruiting

participants. Many are concerned, he said, that they will be among the one-third of participants to receive a placebo.

"The study itself has been fine," Bartoszek said. "The biggest challenge is convincing folks to participate. Soldiers are hesitant to risk not getting the treatment they believe might calm their symptoms." Bartoszek has accounted for roughly half of all stellate ganglion block procedures done at Womack since 2011, when a predecessor introduced the treatment to local troops suffering from PTSD. Over that time, the hospital has treated many PTSD sufferers, repeating injections as needed. Bartoszek said the results have been extremely positive. "It's continued to do well," he said. "People notice the difference."

A previous study conducted with 166 patients at Womack found more than 70 percent "had a clinically significant improvement" to their symptoms that persisted for months. Officials believe that by administering anesthetic to the stellate ganglion - a cluster of nerves related to the sympathetic nervous system found in the neck—they can affect the part of the body that helps control pain, body temperature and the manifestations of post-traumatic stress. In effect, the procedure reduces nerve growth, limiting the body's "fight or flight" response.

Bartoszek has described the treatment as helping to bring veterans back to a normal range of alertness. Veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress may always be on high alert, he said. A stellate ganglion block doesn't remove their alertness. But it resets the range. That can often make veterans feel less agitated and less likely to be quick to anger. And that, in turn, can open them up to more traditional treatments.

The lack of a prior extensive clinical trial is part of the reason the procedure has yet to gain wide acceptance as a treatment for PTSD. Womack has been an early adopter of the procedure. But it's still only offered in four military hospitals - Womack, Tripler, Landstuhl and Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland.

"We've done it a bunch of times, hundreds of times," Bartoszek said. "In the retrospective, it's safe. But in the world of science, that's not enough." If successful, the doctor said he expects to see more use of the treatment, in and out of military hospitals. "Insurance companies will have a hard time saying 'No' if there is medical evidence," Bartoszek said. "If the study shows that it's helpful, there are very few barriers to improving access."

A stellate ganglion block itself is not new to the medical community. But it is typically used to treat pain, specifically a disorder known as chronic regional pain syndrome, an uncommon form of chronic pain that usually affects an arm or a leg. It wasn't until 2007 that a Chicago anesthesiologist made the first link between the procedure and PTSD. The trial is being conducted with the help of RTI International in Research Triangle Park, using a \$2 million Department of Defense grant. But its success depends on attracting participants. "The DOD is interested, but if we can't meet our quota, it would be for naught," Bartoszek said. The doctor said he couldn't discuss exact numbers of current trial participants, but did say the trial is falling short of its goals. "We're not doing as well as we'd like," he said.

Participants must meet a minimum threshold in their PTSD symptoms, and have no deployments, separations or change of stations within the two-month length of their participation. They also must be on active duty and not have received a stellate ganglion block previously nor be facing military judicial punishment. Carol Sheff, research coordinator for the study, said the participants do not need to be Fort Bragg soldiers. They can be from any military branch, and come from any installation. "If people can get here, they can get the treatment," Sheff said. Officials said they hoped service members from Camp Lejeune, Seymour Johnson Air Force Base and military installations in Virginia and other surrounding states would be willing to participate. "It's a chance for them to make a difference," Bartoszek said. "Those

that are participating are doing it to help soldiers of the future. That sacrifice can occur now for the soldiers that come after them."

For more information on the trial, contact Sheff at 919- 407-1093 or csheff@sgb.rti.org, or go to <https://sgbstudy.rti.org>

[Source: The Fayetteville Observer, Drew Brooks | December 5, 2016 ++]

► OTHER NEWS

PLAN DROPPED TO REGISTER WOMEN

Lawmakers have officially dropped plans to make women register for the draft, instead opting for a review of the ongoing need for the Selective Service System. The controversial provision had been part of early drafts of the annual defense authorization bill, and narrowly passed a House Armed Services Committee vote last spring. A Senate panel followed suit a few months later. But conservatives in both chambers objected to the provision and 5 stripped it out of the final legislative draft unveiled 29 NOV. Under current law, men ages 18 to 26 are required to register for possible involuntary military service with the Selective Service System. Women have been exempt, and past legal challenges have pointed to combat restrictions placed on their military service as a reason for their exclusion.

Early this year, Defense Secretary Ash Carter removed those restrictions, opening combat posts to women for the first time. In response, a collection of military leaders and women's rights advocates said they would support requiring women to now register for the draft. Instead, the final authorization bill draft calls for a review of the entire Selective Service System, to see if the idea of a military draft is still realistic and cost-effective. The system has an annual budget of about \$23 million, but watchdog groups have questioned whether the system could assemble a list of draftees if a national emergency were to arise. And military leaders have repeatedly insisted they have no desire to return to the draft to fill the ranks. No Americans have been pressed into involuntary military service since the last draft ended in 1973. Though Democrats are likely to renew debate on the issue next year, it's unlikely to progress far with Republicans set to control both chambers of Congress and the White House.

[Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane | November 29, 2016 ++]

MILITARY AWARDS REVIEW

Two Navy Cross recipients honored for acts of valor in Afghanistan or Iraq instead deserved the Medal of Honor for their actions and are being nominated for an upgrade, the Navy said 6 DEC. The announcement was part of a review of all Silver Stars and service crosses awarded since Sept. 11, 2001. As part of the review, the Navy has also determined that an unspecified number of Silver Stars will be upgraded to Navy Crosses. The department-wide medals review was directed by former Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel in 2014 after questions arose about how there appeared to be so few Medal of Honor recipients from more than a decade of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Navy is the first to announce its findings.

To date, there have been four Medal of Honor recipients for actions in Iraq, all awarded posthumously. There have been 14 Medal of Honor recipients for actions in Afghanistan. Earlier this year, the services

told Stars and Stripes that a total of 1,357 medals were being reviewed to determine whether they should be upgraded. The Army is reviewing 785 Silver Star and Distinguished Service Cross awards; the Navy, including the Marines, reviewed 425 Navy Cross and Silver Star medals, and the Air Force is reviewing 147 medals, including 135 Silver Stars and 12 Air Force Crosses. None of the medals under review would be downgraded, officials said. Capt. Patrick McNally, a spokesman for Navy Secretary Ray Mabus, said the secretary had “recommended that two Navy Cross recipients be considered for the Medal of Honor.”

Those recommendations would have to be approved by the president and the Pentagon might need to get a waiver from Congress depending on when the act of valor took place, because law stipulates Medals of Honor must be awarded within five years of the action. McNally also said the Navy has completed its review of potential Silver Stars that will be upgrades to Navy Crosses. Upgrading an award from Silver Star to a service cross only needs approval from the service secretary. “Those are complete and will be awarded in individual ceremonies,” McNally said. He could not say how many Navy Crosses would be awarded or when it will happen. [Source: Stars & Stripes | Tara Cope | December 6, 2016 ++]

► PENDING LEGISLATION

HOUSE LEGISLATION:

H.R.6407 Introduced—VA Health Care Access Update 46

Responding to a report released in October that found the Department of Veterans Affairs has been slow to make changes after the 2014 wait-time scandal, two lawmakers have introduced legislation to force the VA to speed up reform. Rep. Derek Kilmer (D-WA) and Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-WA) introduced the VA Management Alignment Act of 2016 to the House on 30 NOV. The measure would require the VA secretary to submit plans to the House and Senate veterans committees within 180 days after the bill goes into effect, detailing the roles and responsibilities of VA executives and spelling out how they would improve veterans’ access to treatment. “This would force action on persistent problems,” Kilmer said. “After the wait-time scandal, we saw a number of good proposals sent to the VA to fix things. As the [Government Accountability Office] report makes clear, a lot of those recommendations were ignored.”

Last year, Kilmer called on the Government Accountability Office to do a comprehensive study of management problems on the health care side of the VA. Investigators with the Office of Inspector General had previously discovered that some managers at VA hospitals instructed employees to falsify data about how long veterans were waiting for care. Since then, the agency has undergone internal and external reviews and inspections into its management practices, business processes, staffing levels and veterans’ access to care. The reviews came at a cost to taxpayers. One of the reviews cost \$68 million to perform and it was mandated by the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act, which included an assessment of all areas of the VA’s health care delivery system.

Answering Kilmer’s request, the GAO released its report in October, stating the VA doesn’t have a process for following through with the recommendations that it receives or to effectively make changes. The report also states without a process, there’s “little assurance” the deliver of health care will improve. It goes on to say the VA can’t confirm that it’s holding leaders accountable for making improvements. Kilmer said he’s hopeful the legislation can pass before the end of the busy, lame-duck session, which is scheduled to end in

mid-December. “I don’t think there’s a reason to delay,” he said. “There’s bipartisan support for seeing systemic change happen within the VHA.”

[Source: Stars & Stripes | Nikki Wentling | December 1, 2016 ++]

H.R.5166 | Streamlining Being Blocked

According to Representatives Ted Yoho (R-FL.) and Rodney Davis (R-IL), the Department of Veterans Affairs and Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV) are standing in the way of improving customer service for our nation’s veterans. The representatives introduced WINGMAN (H.R. 5166) in May of this year with broad bipartisan support - 137 of their colleagues in the House signed on as co-sponsors. The bill allows trained congressional caseworkers to check the status of a veteran’s claim and view relevant files within the VA’s claims system. Veterans often contact their offices as a last resort because they have already spent weeks or months waiting for the VA to respond to their request. This will streamline the claims process by eliminating the burdensome step of having to use the VA as a middle-man. WINGMAN will reduce the wait time for file requests by veterans, which can take weeks or even years.

This past week the House unanimously passed WINGMAN and sent it to the Senate. The Senate has the opportunity to hotline this commonsense bill so the government can begin to help frustrated veterans and their families before this Congress adjourns. Unfortunately, Sen. Reid and a few Democrats in the Senate are blocking these efforts seemingly to protect the VA. Two years ago, along with more than a hundred Representatives, VA was approached about changing the way constituent caseworkers could expedite the claims process. Months later, House representatives received a polite response explaining the VA was working to better serve veterans and looked forward to working with Congress moving forward. Representatives continued to write the VA and they continued to make politely vague comments while veterans who have contacted their offices for help continued to wait for answers.

The thing about VA management is, it does not like change, it fears transparency, and it has virtually no accountability unless Congress chooses to flex its muscle and hold them accountable. Throughout the process of moving WINGMAN through the House, the VA has attempted to thwart the bill. They have tried to stall progress by delaying responses and sending inflated figures to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO). Senate Democrats have reportedly said they are concerned with the cost but this bill does not create any new system nor does it authorize any additional spending. It simply grants congressional offices access to a system already in place. Additionally, the bill caps VA spending on implementation at no more than \$10 million. In the long term, this bill has the potential to save the VA money by allowing congressional offices to help.

Less than a month ago, our nation celebrated Veterans Day. For a day, the nation was unified in a moment of remembrance and gratitude. Representatives passed this bill thinking of the faces of each veteran whose hand they shook that day, every medal ceremony they attended since being elected, and honor flight they have greeted at the World War II monument. But most of all they are thinking of the numerous heart wrenching stories they have heard from veterans and their families who feel abandoned by the agency whose sole mission it is to care for them. The term “customer service” is too often forgotten in federal bureaucracies. And in lieu of the many scandals within the VA system, one would think any relief or improvement would be welcomed. Congress owes it to those veterans we represent to do our job and hold the VA accountable.

WINGMAN had the support of every member of the House VA Committee and received unanimous support by the 435 members of the U.S. House of Representatives. However, Sen. Reid stands in

WINGMAN's way. Does Sen. Reid know more than the 435 members of the House or the unanimous support of the House VA Committee? We will not forget the promises we made to our veterans. We will fight for them every day of every year that we are in office. We are deeply saddened that a few of our colleagues in the Senate cannot, or will not, do the same.

[Source: The Hill | Reps. Ted Yoho & Rodney Davis | December 7, 2016 ++]

H.R.6416 | Omnibus Improvements

On 6 DEC, the House of Representatives voted unanimously to pass HR 6416, the “Jeff Miller and Richard Blumenthal Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2016.” This is a bipartisan bill sponsored in the House by Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Rep. Jeff Miller (R-FL) and in the Senate by Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), the senior Democrat on the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. This omnibus legislation included a long list of changes, including provisions to:

- Require a GAO review of VA regional offices' claims processing performance,
- Award veteran status for all guard and reserve retirees,
- Expand Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry scholarship coverage for survivors of members who died in service between 2001 and 2005,
- Authority to modify hours of work for VA physicians,
- Improve assistance for homeless vets; and
- Require studies of potential effects of veterans' toxic exposures on their children.
- Expedite payment of survivor benefits.

MOAA strongly supported this legislation, but was concerned whether or not the Senate would take it up as time was running out on the legislative year. Fortunately they did and the bill is now awaiting the President's signature.

[Source: MOAA Leg UP | December 8, 2016 ++]

(Ed. Note: The very important bill below, which will help veterans who received less than honorable discharges due to PTSD and TBI as a result of their combat experience, is waiting to be signed by the President. If passed, these veterans may be able to get their discharges changed to honorable.)

VVA APPLAUDS INCLUSION OF FAIRNESS FOR VETERANS PROVISION

(Washington, D.C.)— “We are heartened to learn that the ‘Fairness for Veterans’ provision was included in the conferenced version of the NDAA,” said John Rowan, National President of Vietnam Veterans of America. “This is one small step towards the much-needed reforms of the Department of Defense’s Discharge Review Boards.”

The Fairness for Veterans Act (S.1567/HR.4683) has the support of a bipartisan coalition, including many veterans elected to Congress. This bill, if enacted, would codify into law the 2014 “Hagel Memo,” issued by former Secretary of Defense and Vietnam veteran Chuck Hagel. The Hagel Memo calls for the Boards for Corrections of Military Records to apply “liberal consideration” in favor of Vietnam veterans, contending that PTSD was a contributing factor in circumstances surrounding other-than-honorable discharges. While the Hagel Memo was interpreted narrowly by the military’s review board agencies, it did impact a handful of Vietnam veterans with PTSD. The Fairness for Veterans Act clarifies and strengthens

the spirit of the Hagel Memo by applying it more broadly to Post-9/11 veterans with less-than-honorable discharges.

“VVA is particularly thankful to those Members of Congress who have put considerable time into this effort, including Senators Peters, Tillis, Gillibrand, and McCain – and Representatives Coffman, Walz, Zeldin, and Moulton. These Members crossed party lines and worked on common-sense legislation to protect our country’s most vulnerable veterans. For that, we are exceedingly grateful.”

“This is a fight that VVA has lead for four decades, and we’re glad to see broad, bipartisan support for the Fairness for Veterans provision,” continued Rowan. “We are cautiously optimistic to see the Fairness for Veterans provision make it this far. If this Congress does not pass this version of the NDAA before the end of the year, we’ll continue to push for this bill as a stand-alone. Veterans cannot wait any longer for Fairness to become law.”

TOXIC EXPOSURE ACT OF 2015 BECOMES LAW

Vietnam Veterans of America
Legislative Update

December 23, 2016

The 114th Congress has recessed for the year.

On behalf of John Rowan, VVA National President and the Board of Directors we would like to thank you for all of your grassroots advocacy support over the past year.

With that said, on December 16, 2016, the President of the United States provides VVA with a tremendous victory when he signed into law H.R. 6416, the Jeff Miller and Richard Blumenthal Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2016.

The new law in Subtitle C-Toxic Exposure, includes S.901 the Toxic Exposure Research Act of 2015 an issue that VVA has been working on for the past eight years. Go to www.Congress.gov and type in H.R. 6416 to view the new law.

► BRINGING THEM HOME



The number of Americans who remain missing from conflicts in this century are: World War II (73,515) Korean War (7,841), Cold War (126), Vietnam War (1,627), 1991 Gulf War (5), and Libya (1).

WWII

1st Lt. Francis J. Pitonyvak, US Army Air Forces, lost 10/28/43 in Territory of Papua. 36th Fighter Group, 8th Fighter Squadron; accounted for 12/20/16.

Fire Controlman 2nd Class Donald R. McCloud, US Navy. Lost 12/7/41 on USS Oklahoma in Pearl Harbor; accounted for 12/16/16.

Radioman 3rd Class Howard W. Bean, US Navy. Lost 12/7/41 on USS Oklahoma in Pearl Harbor; accounted for 12/16/16.

Electrician's Mate 3rd Class Cecil E. Barncord, US Navy. Lost 12/7/41 on USS Oklahoma in Pearl Harbor; accounted for 12/16/16.

Seaman 2nd Class Floyd F. Clifford, US Navy. Lost 12/7/41 on USS Oklahoma in Pearl Harbor; accounted for 12/14/16.

Seaman 1st Class Harold R. Roesch, US Navy. Lost 12/7/41 on USS Oklahoma in Pearl Harbor; accounted for 12/14/16.

Fireman 2nd Class Kenneth L. Holm, US Navy. Lost 12/7/41 on USS Oklahoma in Pearl Harbor; accounted for 12/14/16.

SSgt Byron H. Nelson, Army Air Forces. Lost 4/25/44 in Italy; accounted for 12/12/16. Nelson was a nose gunner aboard an American B-24G Liberator bomber with the 721st Bomb Squadron, 450th Bomb Group, 15th Air Force. During a bombing run near Varese, Italy, on April 25, 1944, Nelson's aircraft and two others were separated from the formation due to dense clouds and later attacked by German fighters. Of the 10 crewmen, six parachuted from the aircraft and escaped capture, two parachuted and were captured by German forces, and two perished in the crash. Nelson was reported to be one of the two who perished.

Yeoman 3rd Class Edmund T. Ryan, US Navy. Lost 12/7/41 on USS Oklahoma in Pearl Harbor; accounted for 12/9/16.

Capt. Albert L. Schlegel, USAAF. 335th Fighter Squadron, 84th Fighter Group, 8th Air Force. Lost 8/28/44 in France; accounted for 12/9/16.

1st Lt Robert E. Moessner, US Army Air Forces. 373rd Bomb Squadron, 308th Bomb Group. Lost 4/18/44 in China; accounted for 11/17/16.

FM1c Warren G. Nelson, USMC. Co E, 2nd Btn, 8th Marines, 2nd Marine Div. Lost 11/20/43 at Tarawa Atoll; accounted for 10/5/16.

1st Lt. Ben B. Barnes, US Army Air Forces. Lost 12/5/44 in Germany; accounted for 9/17/16. On Dec. 5, 1944, Barnes was assigned to the 361st Fighter Squadron, 356th Fighter Group, as the pilot of a single seat P-51D aircraft on an escort mission to Berlin, Germany, when he encountered enemy aircraft during the return flight. His plane was last reported northeast of Berlin over Eberswalde, and a German military shoot-down report documented a P-51 near Carlshof. However, due to political restrictions in the Russian-occupied zone, American Graves Registration teams were unable to conduct further investigations. The War Department declared Barnes deceased as of Dec. 6, 1945. In August 2010, a Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command investigation team conducted field research and interviewed an eyewitness who recalled being in the fields when the plane crashed. He led investigators to the location where he found wreckage, which was consistent with the site described by German investigators in 1953.

Pfc James S. Smith, USMC. Lost 11/20/43 at Tarawa Atoll; accounted for 9/6/16. In November 1943, Smith was assigned to Company C, 2nd Amphibious Tractor Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands, in an attempt to secure the island. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and Sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded, but the Japanese were virtually annihilated. Smith died sometime during the first day of the battle, Nov. 20, 1943. Despite the heavy casualties suffered by U.S. forces, military success in the battle of Tarawa was a huge victory for the U.S. military because the Gilbert Islands provided the U.S. Navy Pacific Fleet a platform from which to launch assaults on the Marshall and Caroline Islands to advance their Central Pacific Campaign against Japan. Smith's company incurred 20 casualties over the course of the battle with 18 of them occurring on the first day. His casualty card initially listed him as missing in action and did not list burial information. Based on the prolonged lack of information regarding his whereabouts, the Navy made a presumptive finding of death as of Nov. 21, 1944. In June 2011, a nongovernmental organization, History Flight, Inc., notified DPAA that they discovered a burial site on Betio Island. In 2012, a Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (now DPAA) team excavated the site and recovered three individual sets of remains.

Pfc Nicholas J. Cancilla, USMC Reserves. Co B, 1st Btn, 2nd Marines, 2nd Marine Div. Lost 11/20/43 at Tarawa Atoll; accounted for 9/6/16.

Sgt James J. Hubert, USMC. Co H, 2nd Btn, 8th Marines, 2nd Marine Div. Lost 11/21/43 at Tarawa Atoll; accounted for 9/1/16.

Pfc Ben H. Gore, USMC. Special Warfare Group, 2nd Def. Btn, Fleet Marine Force. Lost 11/25/43 at Tarawa Atoll; accounted for 9/1/16.

Pfc John W. MacDonald, USMC. Co F, 2nd Btn, 8th Marines, 2nd Marine Div. Lost 11/20/43 at Tarawa Atoll; accounted for 9/1/16.

KOREAN WAR:

Cpl. Joseph Pelletier, US Army, lost 2/13/51 in North Korea. Headquarters Battery, 15th Field Artillery; accounted for 12/21/15.

Sgt. Thomas E. Zimmer, US Army. Battery A, 57th Field Artillery Btn, 31st Regimental Combat Team, 7th Infantry Div. Lost 12/6/50 in North Korea; accounted for 12/18/16.

Pfc Charles C. Follse, US Army; Company K, 3rd Btn, 187th Airborne Infantry Regiment. Lost 11/30/50 in North Korea; accounted for 12/17/16.

Pfc Thomas C. Stagg, US Army; Company K, 3rd Btn, 187th Airborne Infantry Regiment. Lost 11/29/50 in North Korea; accounted for 12/15/16.

Cpl Luis P. Torres, US Army; Company C, 1st Btn, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry. Lost 9/1/50 in South Korea; accounted for 12/15/16.

Cpl Jules Hauterman, US Army. Medical Platoon, 1st Bt6n, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Div. Lost 12/2/50 in North Korea; accounted for 12/14/16.

Cpl. George A. Perreault, US Army. Headquarters Battery, 15th Field Artillery Btn, 2nd Infantry Div. Lost 2/13/51 in South Korea; accounted for 12/13/16.

Cpl. James T. Mainhart, US Army. Company 1, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Div. Lost 11/30/50 in North Korea; accounted for 12/12/16.

Sgt. Homer R. Abney, US Army. Company A, 1st Btn, 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Div. Lost 11/30/50 in North Korea; accounted for 12/9/16.

Cpl. Gerald I. Shepler, US Army. Company K, 3rd Btn, 187th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Div. Lost 11/29/50 in North Korea; accounted for 12/9/16.

Cpl Edward Pool, US Army. 31st Heavy Mortar Co., 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Div. Lost 11/30/50 in North Korea; accounted for 12/9/16.

Sgt Stafford L. Morris, US Army. Battery A, 503rd Field Artillery Btn, 2nd Infantry Div. Lost 12/1/50 in North Korea; accounted for 12/7/16.

MSgt Joseph Durakovich, US Army. Company G, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Div. Lost 11/28/50 in North Korea; accounted for 11/22/16.

Cpl Lewis A. Damewood, US Army. Company A, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Div. Lost 11/28/50 in North Korea; accounted for 11/22/16.

Sgt 1st Class Robert R. Cummings, US Army. Company K, 3rd Btn, 187th Airborne Infantry Regiment. Lost 11/29/50 in North Korea; accounted for 11/14/16.

Pfc Daniel Hunt, US Army. Lost 9/28/51 in South Korea; accounted for 11/2/16. Hunt was a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, in the vicinity of Hill 1030, conducting operations near an area referred to as Heartbreak Ridge. The Chinese launched an attack, which the company repelled. They were then ordered to move east and attack the enemy on Hill 867 nearby. Prior to their attack, the enemy launched a barrage of mortar fire against the Americans, and survivors withdrew to friendly lines. Following the withdrawal, Hunt was reported missing in action. During an investigation by the U.S. Army Casualty office, three members of Hunt's unit reported that he had been killed during the fight. Based on this information, the U.S. Army declared him deceased. On Feb. 12, 2016, the Republic of Korea unilaterally turned over remains believed to be unaccounted-for Americans from the Korean War. The recovered remains were reported to have been found near Heartbreak Ridge.

Pfc Lavern C. Ullmer, US Army. Lost 11/30/50 in North Korea; accounted for 10/25/16. Ullmer was a member of Company B, 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, fighting units of the Chinese People's Volunteer Forces (CPVF) in North Korea, in a delaying action south from the Ch'ongch'on River to Kunu-ri. Within days, more than half of the regiment was lost due to attacks from the CPVF. The unit was ordered to withdraw, and when Ullmer could not be accounted for, he was declared missing in action on Nov. 30, 1950. Ullmer's name did not appear on any POW list provided by the CPVF or the North Korean People's Army; however two repatriated American prisoners of war reported that Ullmer died at Hofong Camp, part of Pukchin-Tarigol Camp Cluster, on Jan. 21, 1951. Based on this information, a military review board amended Ullmer's status to deceased in 1951. In April and May of

2005, a Joint Recovery Team conducted the 37th Joint Field Activity in Unsan County, South Pyongan Province, North Korea. On April 19, the team visited a site reported by a local witness to contain American remains.

Maj Jack D. Griffiths, US Army. Headquarters, 38th Field Artillery Btn, 2nd Infantry Btn. Lost 11/30/50 in North Korea; accounted for 10/25/16.

Cpl Donald E. Matney, US Army. Company H, 2nd Btn, 19th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Div. Lost 7/20/50 in South Korea; accounted for 10/19/16.

Sgt James E. Martin, US Army. Company I, 3rd Btn, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Div. Lost 12/3/50 in North Korea; accounted for 10/18/16.

Cpl Melvin R. Hill, US Army. X Corps, Heavy Mortar Co, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Div. Lost 11/2/50 in North Korea; accounted for 10/12/16.

Cpl Milton T. Bullis, US Army. Medical Co, 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Div. Lost 12/1/50 in North Korea; accounted for 9/29/16.

Pfc William W. Cowan, US Army. Co M, 3rd Btn, 38th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Div. Lost 2/12/51 in South Korea; accounted for 9/23/16.

Pfc Everett E. Johnson, US Army. Co F, 2nd Btn, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry. Lost 9/3/50 in South Korea; accounted for 9/19/16.

Pfc William V. Giovanniello, US Army. Co F, 35th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Div. Lost 4/25/51 in South Korea; accounted for 9/19/16.

Cpl Roy C. Fink, US Army. Co B, 1st Btn, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Div. Lost 12/2/50 in North Korea; accounted for 9/14/16.

Pfc Kenneth R. Miller, US Army. Co K, 3rd Btn, 19th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Div. Lost 4/23/51 in North Korea; accounted for 9/12/16.

Cpl. William H. Smith, US Army. Co E, 2nd Btn, 35th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Div. Lost 11/28/50 in North Korea; accounted for 9/12/16.

Cpl Donald R. Hendrickson, US Army. Headquarters Bty, 57th Field Artillery Btn, 31st Regimental Combat Team, 7th Infantry Div. Lost 12/6/50 in North Korea; accounted for 9/7/16.

Cpl Wayne Minard, US Army. Co C, 1st Btn, 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Div. Lost 11/26/50 in North Korea; accounted for 9/7/16.

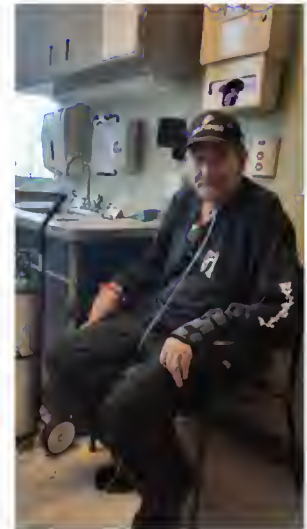
Cpl Vernon D. Presswood, US Army. Heavy Mortar Co, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Div. Lost 12/2/50 in North Korea; accounted for 9/6/16.

Cpl David T. Nordin, Jr. US Army. Co K, 3rd Btn, 35th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Div. Lost 11/28/50 in North Korea; accounted for 9/6/16.

Sgt 1st Class Louis M. Baxter, US Army. Headquarters Bty, 57th Field Artillery Btn, 31st Regimental Combat Team, 7th Infantry Div. Lost 12/6/50 in North Korea, accounted for 9/6/16.

► SICK CALL

Mike “General’s Driver” Jones, Southern Route Ambassador Lead and Advance Team member this year, was in a serious motorcycle accident Sept. 17 in Kansas. Sadly, Mike’s beloved dog, the General, did not survive the accident. Mike was released from the hospital November 17 into rehab and is now recovering nicely. He lives with his daughter, Amanda, and her husband in Missouri and she said he is doing very well. He is able to walk the short distance through the house by himself, but needs a walker when he leaves the house. He is on oxygen because he is unable to breathe completely on his own yet. He does not have the use of his left arm due to nerve damage, but the doctors are confident his left arm will recover fully. Mike will soon have a new puppy, which Amanda will take him to South Carolina to pick out. He already has a name for his new companion: Lt. Dan.



A GoFundMe account has been created to raise funds to support Mike and his recovery. <https://www.gofundme.com/2q4mkss>. The AmeriVAL Group is giving \$10 from the sale of every DVD they made of Mike and the General together. Filmed during Run For The Wall 2016, this footage is part of the 300 hours being edited for the final “Brotherhood of Thunder: The Story of American Warriors and their Motorcycles” docuseries (https://youtu.be/0_0YAtvLB1g). Visit the website www.brotherhoodofthunder.com and enter GENERAL in the PROMO CODE box, and AmeriVAL will forward the proceeds to Mike’s family.

► TAPS

Eddie “Lil Grumpy” Lacey



Eddie, son of Judy Lacey, passed away October 9 of a heart attack at the age of 51. Eddie was a RFTW CR chase vehicle driver for several years and a participant every year until his death. He was also a So. California PGR member and participated in many missions, as well as Ride To The Flags missions. He often welcomed home troops at airports when they arrived home from Iraq or Afghanistan. He never served, but had so much respect for our

active duty and veterans and did everything he could to honor them. On RFTW, Lil Grumpy loved spending time with the children of Rainelle, wearing one of his “Grumpy” hats to entertain them.



Seth McKee—D-Day General

The highest-ranking survivor of the D-Day invasion during World War II died on December 26 in Scottsdale, AZ at the age of 100. Just two months ago, Seth McKee was awarded the National Order of the Legion of Honor in the rank of Chevalier 5, according to the Air Force. That's the highest honor France bestows on its citizens and foreign nationals. McKee, who began his military career in 1935, logged more than 190 hours in 69 combat missions in the P-38 Lightning, and is credited with downing two enemy aircraft. He flew cover for the D-Day invasion and was involved in bombing missions at Saint-Lo, the Falaise Gap and the Battle of the Bulge.



After World War II, McKee held positions of increasing responsibility both at home and overseas. He retired in 1973 as commander of the North American Air Defense Command.

McKee was born in 1916 in McGehee, Arkansas, according to his official Air Force bio. He began his military career in 1935 as a member of the Missouri National Guard, and his career as an aviator in 1938. McKee graduated from flight training in February 1939. After the war, McKee served in Florida, California, Alabama, Italy, Georgia, Nebraska, South



Dakota and the Pentagon. He also served as commander of U.S. Forces Japan and Fifth Air Force before being appointed assistant vice chief of staff of the Air Force in 1968. McKee's career culminated at NORAD, where he served from 1969 to 1973. His military decorations and awards include the Distinguished Service Medal, the Silver Star, the Legion of Merit with two oak leaf clusters, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with 10 oak leaf clusters, as well as awards from countries such as France, Belgium, Thailand, Japan and South Korea.

[Source: AirForceTimes | December 30, 2016 ++]

You Are Not Forgotten

